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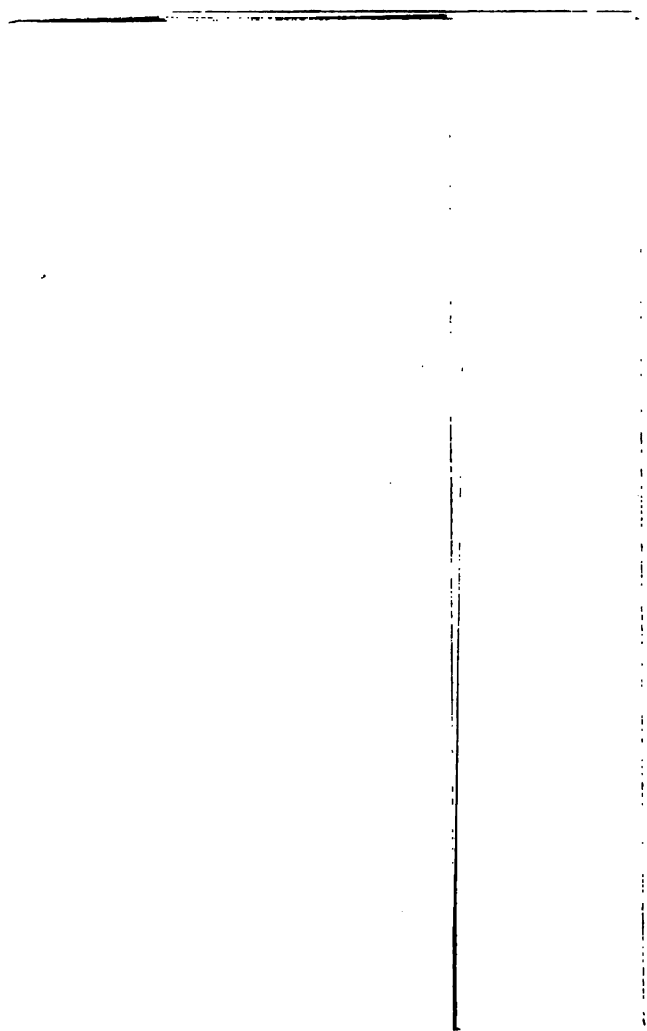


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Phillips Brooks

A Memorial Sermon

3/10/9



Phillips Brooks

A MEMORIAL SERMON

PREACHED AT

ST. JOHN'S MEMORIAL CHAPEL

Cambridge, Massachusetts

ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 29, 1893

BY

WILLIAM LAWRENCE



CAMBRIDGE
PRIVATELY PRINTED

1893



The Author.

CAMBRIDGE, February 3, 1893.

DEAR MR. LAWRENCE, — We, the members of the Committee of St. John's Memorial Chapel, desire to express to you our earnest hope that the beautiful tribute to Bishop Brooks's memory, pronounced by you last Sunday morning, may be preserved in permanent form. And we feel sure that we are only carrying out the wishes of the whole congregation in asking your leave to have the sermon printed for private distribution.

Very sincerely yours,

ARTHUR GILMAN,	CHARLES B. TOWER,
J. GARDNER WHITE,	H. E. SCUDDER,
RICHARD H. DANA,	WARREN K. BLODGETT, JR.,
J. M. WHITTEMORE, JR.,	DAVID G. HASKINS, JR.,
J. W. LOVERING,	

Executive Committee.

CAMBRIDGE, February 7, 1893.

DEAR MR. GILMAN, — Allow me to thank you and the other members of the Executive Committee for your gratifying letter.

The sermon was of such a personal nature that I hesitate to have it put into print. But since you kindly suggest that it shall be printed only for private distribution, I defer to your wish, especially if by so doing I may help any member of the congregation to a fuller appreciation of the saintly character of Phillips Brooks.

Yours with kind regards,

WILLIAM LAWRENCE.

TO MR. ARTHUR GILMAN and others.

Memorial Sermon.

I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David ; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. — EZEK. xxxiv. 23.

THERE is only one subject for us this morning. It has been a week of deep sorrow, but of effulgent glory. You do not ask or want me to set forth any analysis of the character of Phillips Brooks, or any key to the secret of his power, even if I were able. What position he is to take in the line of great preachers, we do not care to discuss. We have no desire to tell the public at large what we think of him. Others may have been able to express some tribute in the public prints, but to all newspapers my lips have been shut. There are tender chords that can be touched only in the company of friends or within the privacy of the church or the precincts of the university. To strike them sharply enough for the street or the market jars the affections.

You know the difficulty of the task of even suggesting his traits of character. So much to say! We have been talking of him for a week now; and yet our words are so impotent as compared with what might be said if only we had the ability to express it. Like children picking flowers at the mountain's base, each of us has his lovely memory of the word of cheer, the inspiration of a sermon, or the companionship of a few hours; each one has caught something from that great spiritual personality. But we are still playing about the base. His spiritual altitude went above the clouds, and was hidden in the pure ether of heaven.

Yet we must speak; and you who are sympathetic will be partial if I seem to say nothing.

How his life has passed like a dream! The tall, awkward, bashful, cheery student of Harvard in the long-ago days of Presidents Sparks and Walker, studying by spurts, and yet ranking well up near the head of his class; marked for three things, — his purity of thought and life, the even temper of his disposition, and the ability even then to write long, flowing themes, teeming with thought and suggestion. Then the year as a teacher in the Boston Latin School, successful in winning

the love of a few of the best boys, but an utter failure in holding control of the average. Sharp discipline, not suasion and inspiration, were the school methods then. He was no disciplinarian; and under the old *régime* he had no opportunity to show his powers of suasion. Perhaps they were not yet developed.

Then those happy years in the seminary at Alexandria. There he studied, and unconsciously developed in intellectual strength and spiritual thought and expression. There he made his first efforts to break through his bashfulness in extempore address, in simple talk to the poor whites and negroes of Virginia, preaching, as he said in his humorous way, upon the subject "The Simplicity of the Gospel," a sermon which, as his friend told him, had neither simplicity nor much gospel. Two great influences he carried away from there, — one was the development of that earnest, evangelical spirit and missionary enthusiasm which went with him through life, which made his annual foreign missionary sermons epochs in the life of his parishes, and which led him to a deep sympathy for mission work in all its forms; and the other, the impress not so much of the learning nor of the theology as of the char-

acter of one man, Dr. Sparrow. As life went on, that great character of the past idealized itself more and more in his memory. He turned back to it for strength, and one can read it between the lines of his sermons; yes, in "Gamaliel the Teacher," that sermon preached in the Temple Church in London, old Dr. Sparrow was speaking to the lawyers of the world's metropolis.

So the young graduate went out, unconscious himself (though it may be that a glimmer of consciousness came over him now and again) of his undeveloped power, but not unrecognized by others; for one of his professors in Alexandria, who has lived to see his prophecy come true, said, as Phillips Brooks left the school: "That young man is fitted for any position that the Church has to give him."

Then the two or three years in the Church of the Advent, Philadelphia, among humble and middle-class people, the enthusiastic and devoted pastor, entering, as he always did, into the sympathies and troubles of each one. He told me once, in talking of what deeds gain the loyalty of one's people, that his first hold on his first parish was unconsciously gained in this way. He called upon a poor mother, held in the house by her sick child; he sent her out for fresh air while he took

care of the child. This incident, which has been told as of his later years, belongs to his Philadelphia life. Again, he sat up one night as nurse to a poor and sick parishioner. To one who knew him such incidents are hardly worth the telling, for they were so natural to him that they are only what we know he would do. But even then the great church of Philadelphia felt the spirit stirring in the young preacher on the other side of the city; and, with the resignation of Dr. Vinton, the people of Holy Trinity Parish recalled a sermon preached by Phillips Brooks a few months before in exchange with their rector, from the text, "Honey out of the rock," that was a revelation to them of the sweetness and the power of the young life. They called him to be their pastor; and although only three years in the ministry, he undertook the rectorship of one of the largest parishes in the country. Those who know him only in Boston think of him as having lived out his life here; but those of us who have lived for a while in Philadelphia know how strongly they feel that he lived out a full life there. He gained possession of the city, moved the hearts of the people, broke through the trammels of a provincial theology, and in the crises of the war spoke such a clarion

note against slavery, for the Union, as roused that city, and caused the thousands who were sympathetic with the South to restrain the expression of their opinion.

How well I remember, if you will pardon me, how as a boy in 1863, in one of the dark times of the war, my father and I, in passing a Sunday in Philadelphia, were told of his power. We heard him; and as he came down the aisle after the service, my father claimed him as an old Sunday-school scholar in St. Paul's in Boston. And though most incidents of those days are forgotten, I cannot forget the tall, commanding figure as he approached us, and the frank and cheery way with which he greeted a young boy from the city of his boyhood.

With that masterful instinct of widening his influence, he moved in all those lines of philanthropic and political as well as religious interests which carried his name and influence to distant cities.

Then came the call to Boston. Although devoted to his old city, and knowing his opportunity there, with characteristic loyalty to his parish, he declined. But those vestrymen at Trinity Church had the patience to wait: they were determined that he should come; and finally the scruples were overcome, and

he became rector of old Trinity in Summer Street. Old Trinity! with square embattled tower, granite-walled, lacking in warmth and beauty within, and cold without, — expressive of much of the theology and religious life which had been there. But now a new spirit had entered. The dreary old chapel in the rear was warmed and suffused with the eloquence of the Wednesday evening lecture. And who can forget those Saturday evening preparations for the Holy Communion? How the stately old people stand forth in one's memory; the old sexton, Dillon, driving the poor up into the gallery, and giving to the rich strangers the pews on the floor! That could not last. And as on one Sunday morning the great Boston fire melted the walls, so had that spirit within been melting and moulding the lives and the hearts and the theologies of the people, and they were ready to enter into a new, warm, rich, and lofty church, expressive of him who was leading them.

It was at this time, soon after he had gained his hold on his own parish, that he again began to broaden his influence. His own University had hardly begun to recognize him; but his old friend and pastor of his boyhood, Dr. Stone, the Dean of this school, knew what

was in him, and through his invitation Phillips Brooks made his first impress upon Cambridge in this chapel. It is fitting that this pulpit should be draped in mourning. Many of you remember those special Sunday evening services once a month with Phillips Brooks as preacher. It seems long ago now; and yet the influence of those sermons and the sound of his voice seem to linger around the walls of the building.

Then he entered upon his work for this school; then he championed her when she was suspected, urged her claims, cheered her teachers, and inspired her students,—a work that ceased not till his lips were silent. Still moving out and broadening his horizon, he preached twice every Sunday in Trinity Church, and his third Sunday sermon in the different parishes and missions about Boston; he entered into the educational and civic interests of the State; and then he threw himself, with that enthusiasm and unstinting spirit, into the work of the University,—unique in its power and in its wide-reaching influence. For six successive days the great city of New York was moved by him. Wall Street emptied itself in old Trinity; from twelve to one, business stopped in order that business men might hear of Christ

from the lips of Phillips Brooks. But still again, wider and wider, over to England, in the London churches and cathedrals, through the provincial towns, his voice was heard. How well I remember that first sermon of his in Westminster Abbey, "Walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." To me it marked the movements of his career. I had heard it in his own parish church; I had gone as his companion over Sunday to New Haven, and heard it there as he pressed his personality upon Yale College; again I had heard it in this chapel, as he emphasized the positiveness of the Christian life in a community whose religion he felt to be too negative; and then again that same sermon, "Walk in the spirit," across the ocean. I shall never forget the look of surprise with which the men and boys of the Abbey choir watched him and drank in his words.

Oxford and Cambridge claimed him; Windsor Castle commanded him; his sermons went into other languages, his voice was heard on board ship on the Red Sea and back in the mountains of India. Ever onward, and wider, and aggressive, Pauline in his spirit; and yet during all this, the faithful pastor, thoughtful of the sick and the afflicted.

It was at this time that being in the Boston Post-Office I was asked by one of the under clerks if I knew Dr. Brooks; "for," said he, "my wife and I have been worshippers in his church, but we are humble people: she was an invalid several months before her death; but Dr. Brooks seemed to concentrate all his sympathy and thought upon her, — weekly visits and then, before her death, daily visits, all so rich in comfort and hope." I mention this only as one of the hundreds, aye, thousands of instances; some of you know them as well as I. No interest in the multitude, no entrancing of the crowd, no flattery, — nothing could turn his sympathy from the one who was most in need of his help. The crowd pressed upon him, but with almost divine instinct he knew who touched and needed him.

But the Church had larger work for him yet. When his name was first mentioned in connection with the bishopric of Massachusetts, there was a surprise on the part of many that it could be considered. He was said to be only a preacher; no administrator; with no interest in the Church at large; no Churchman. I shall speak of this later. But those who so spoke did not know him. In everlasting gratitude to God, be it known

that Massachusetts, true to her best spirit, sunk Churchmanship and differences of opinion, and sought the one man who in spiritual leadership, in Pauline eloquence and saintly character, was born to be the shepherd of his people. "I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant. He shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd."

Not so the whole Church. How far away and yet how near seems that sad time, — sad not for him or for Massachusetts, but for that fraction of the Church that spoke and wrote with the venom of uncharity. "He was reviled, and he reviled not again." How deeply those incidents cut him, no one knows. He had a sense of humor, and he laughed some of them off, and he was silent. But however they might assail his theology or his Churchmanship, there was one thing which they could not touch. "I do not care to hear," he said to a friend, "what those people are saying about me, as long as they criticise my opinions and my position in the Church; but if you hear a word against my moral character, I must know it, — that must be met." But no word against his character could be spoken with truth, and no slander of that kind had to be met.

This fact then stands, — that Phillips Brooks, counted unorthodox, unchurchly, by some men high in the Church, but holding quietly to the theology and the opinions which he had expressed in his sermons, was made a Bishop of this Church; and from this time forth, such breadth of spirit and thought and belief has a right in the Church and in the House of Bishops. Most of us about here knew that already. Like-minded men had been bishops, and still are bishops. But it is well once in a while that a strong note should be struck, and that the whole Church be made to hear that she is not a sect, but that she is Catholic.

And then these fifteen months! As he said to me two months before his consecration, "I am sorry you are going to have so poor a Bishop, but I should like to try a hand at it, and see what a Bishop can do." So unconscious, in an egotistical way, of his power, so apparently oblivious of the crowds that were hanging upon him, and of the power of only one word from his lips, he was at the same time conscious of his power; he knew what he could do, he planned intelligently, he saw his opportunities before others suspected them, and he moved on to them quietly; and I believe that he was less

surprised at the results than were those who wondered at his success.

Those fifteen months of complete consecration! That morning of the 14th October, 1891, in Trinity Church, the day of his consecration! Who that saw his face as to the question of the Presiding Bishop he gave answer, "I will so do, by the help of God;" "I am ready, the Lord being my helper;" "I will so show myself, by God's help," will ever forget it? His countenance was altered, and seemed to be transfigured. Saint Stephen's face, "as it had been the face of an angel," was, I believe, no more transfigured than was his. And from that moment he seemed, in the spirit of reconsecration, to have determined to give himself, regardless of strength and of being spent, to the service of his diocese and the whole Church. How characteristic were his first official acts, — the passing of a morning, only the third day after his consecration, in that Gray Memorial Room, meeting individually the young men of this school who were in his charge as Bishop. And then, what would he do on the first Sunday morning of his episcopate? I watched with interest. Bishop Potter went down to Blackwell's Island, and preached to the paupers the first Sunday after he was

Bishop. And Bishop Brooks, what did he do? He passed that Sunday with a friend in the ministry who was in the deepest sorrow; he preached for him in his little church, and with his eloquence glorified the life of the wife who had passed away; and so, in the quietest way, he gave his first Sunday to the comfort and support of a friend in affliction.

Fifteen glorious months crammed with work! Only a few weeks ago, he happened to mention to me that he had passed a Sunday in New Bedford, and had had a delightful day. It was as though he had gone there for rest. I followed him in New Bedford the next day. "What did the Bishop do last Sunday?" was my first question. "He gave three addresses, preached three sermons, opened our new Parish House with a glorious speech, and talked and laughed till one o'clock in the morning." A characteristic Sunday! What help, comfort, and inspiration he has been to many a poor rector in these few months, no one will ever know. He has "tried his hand at it," and has shown what a Bishop could do!

But, after all, we in Massachusetts knew what he was and what he could do. The whole country was recognizing him, but the

Church needed the broadening, spiritual influence of his character. It was being felt; it was increasingly felt in the last five months and at the General Convention. But oh that the Church in the West and the South could have been given the opportunity to know him as he was! It would have bound us together in a unity of spirit such as bound the diocese of Massachusetts. Oh for ten years, for five years more! God's will be done.

Have I been playing upon the surface of the life? Do I seem not to have entered into the depths of his character? True. And yet it is in the suggestion, in the slight touches of his life, that the depth of his character opens out. Let me, however, suggest a few points which come to mind as I think over the past.

He has been claimed by almost every phase of Christian thought and sect; and certainly, so far as there is truth in their thought or in the sect, he could be claimed, for he was sympathetic with truth wherever found. And yet, if we will cast our thoughts back a little, I think we shall find how his inheritance enabled him to cover a large sweep of New England religious thought. Through his veins ran the blood of New England's evangelicalism. But

the Evangelical Church of New England had some time ago lost something of the spiritual fervor from which it grew,—the theology was hard, and the thought unyielding; but the spirit was still sleeping, sometimes active there. The revolt of Unitarianism, in some respects a moral and in others a humanitarian movement, and in others a movement of the reason, brought out elements hitherto suppressed. And yet in the fluid condition of theological thought, neither of them seemed to meet the conditions of the developing New England life. The historical church of the English-speaking people was beginning to assert itself. Practical, ethical, reasonable, evangelical, there were possibilities within her; and behind them all a vista of history, a wealth of ancient associations, a richness of worship, which gave background and stability; all that seemed to be needed to bring her before the New England people was one personality who would in his life, in his spiritual character, in his love of humanity, in his deep evangelical faith, speak the truths held in all three bodies, and would show that a Church and not a sect was the need of New England, and would pave the way for Christian unity in the spirit of Christian sympathy. Others may think differently. Unitarianism

and Orthodoxy have developed great and beautiful characters; but whatever claims may be made by Christians of other names, I claim that Phillips Brooks is the product of this Church, and could have been neither the product of nor happy in any other. This wide and deep sympathy brought down upon him, as we well know, the accusation that he was no Churchman. Would that those who made the accusation could have heard him talk of the Church! No man has ever been more loyal, more true, and more positive in his devotion to his Church.

We hear that he was no administrator. How was it, then, that Trinity Church was kept moving, with all its mechanism and detail and spiritual force? It was through his power as an administrator. Thoughtful as to detail, conscientious in the little duties, he had that rare faculty of leaving things undone that need not be done, and of handing things over to others to do who could do them as well as he; his was administration and inspiration. He guided, he led, he administered in the larger lines, and he inspired others to do the work with him. How is it, if he were no administrator, that the administration of the diocese of Massachusetts has never been equal to what it is to-day?

Again, we are told that he was no thinker, — emotional, not intellectual. I think his own words as descriptive of Abraham Lincoln answer the question. “The fact is,” he says, “that in all the simplest characters the line between the mental and moral natures is always indistinct. They run together, and in their best combinations we are unable to discriminate in the wisdom that is their result what is moral and what is intellectual. . . . In Mr. Lincoln was vindicated the greatness of real goodness, and the goodness of real greatness.”

He did not, to be sure, have the persistent patience of a scholar in working out to the last one line of thought. He did not care to enter into the labyrinth of casuistry; he was too much interested in the development of manhood, and with keen spiritual instinct he leaped to truths which others had to climb for.

This suggests the feature of his life which stands out most clearly in his work as a preacher. To him the prophet was the man who simply transmits the truth of God into the heart and life of man, who transforms the light and fire of his spirit that he may send that spirit searching into the hearts of others. How familiar it all is! his similes of the sun and the light, of the warmth, and the richness of life, and the reflected glory in na-

ture from the glory of the heavens, — it was all a part of himself. Born into one of the most Christian of Christian homes, blessed with a mother of remarkable character and a genius for religion, he was suffused and saturated with the spirit of Christ from his birth, he lived in the very presence of God, his closest companion was the Son of Man, he interpreted men and life and everything that goes to make up life in the light of God. Through spiritual experience faith in Jesus Christ had so become the texture of his life that to him the Christian life was the only natural one, and the unchristian one unnatural.

“What ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house-tops,” was, I know, one of the verses that hung by him and moulded him. He was the listener and the speaker, the disciple and the apostle. Thus it was not so much that he caught truths and gave them to others, that he looked after thoughts and gave the results of his thought to the community, or that he developed in life and then sent forth the results of his development; but that the truth seized him, God caught him and lifted him and moved him and spoke through him. He was possessed with the spirit of the Son of God, and he spoke from

all the conviction and the weight of his great character and his masterful personality.

So great, and yet so tender ! I do not know in which the greater, — the genius of preaching or the genius of friendship. That has been one of the glories of this week, — that the thousands who have mourned for him mourn not for the preacher or the great man or the Bishop so much as for the friend. His sympathy knew no bounds. We all know how it has been. Pardon me if I speak of myself. But for over twenty years he has been my master, second only to one Master, Jesus Christ. Through the doubts and experiences of college life, and through the difficulties of theological study, he was my constant adviser and friend. No problem of parish work or of pastoral care in all these years that I have not talked out with him. His hopeful words brought me to the happy privileges and responsibilities of this school at Cambridge. Yes ; true it is that I have never written a sermon, or given a lecture, or done a bit of executive work that I have not with more or less consciousness thought of how he would judge it ; and the last word that he spoke to me so few days ago was one of approval of a bit of my poor writing which he had taken the trouble to read and correct.

With the loss of his presence goes out one of the overmastering — no, he was never overmastering — the uplifting friendships and supports of life.

Pardon this word of self; I only speak with perhaps greater emphasis what each one of you feels, — a light has gone out of your life.

Thank God for the truth that he now lives, and is moving on in wider heavenly paths through which he may sometime lead us.

But I must stop. I have said little; I could talk for a week. Two points I must emphasize: How would Phillips Brooks take this sorrow, if such a one could have come upon him? We well know: neither despondent nor discouraged, but with buoyant hope. How well I remember the scorn with which he met the remark of a minister, that when he went to the house of mourning he felt helpless; he had nothing to say, but could only show his sympathy. "Nothing to say!" was the answer; "nothing but to sit by the side of the mourner like two kittens keeping each other warm with sympathy! Have you not the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Comforter, the gospel of hope, the gospel of the Resurrection? Can you not bring them to bear upon the heart of the mourner?" So would he speak to us. The leader is

gone for the moment; but that leader was made a leader only through the power of a greater leader, Jesus Christ. Do not let our love and our admiration of one man blind us to the glory and the beauty of the life which he admired above all. Turn then to Jesus Christ with hope, with strength, with confidence. Go forth, and thank God that you have had the privilege of a short companionship with one who in the beauty and sanctity of his life has led you nearer to your Saviour.

And then, last, we call his life successful; and we speak as if he must have thought that it was a success. But I know that there was one great overhanging disappointment which weighed upon him in some of his darker moments and which drove him to some of his most desperate work. His ideal was high. He longed to bring the men of the best powers, of the highest talent, and of the greatest privilege, — he longed to bring the best and strongest manhood up and into the manhood of Jesus Christ; and the disappointment that hung over him was that with some exceptions the best and strongest manhood did not come into the fulness of communion with Jesus Christ. We have talked this week of the

satisfaction that it would have given him, aye, that it may have given him, to know that the students of the University for which he gave so much of his life carried his body up and down the aisle of Trinity, and placed it in its last resting-place; that they came out and stood silent and uncovered in the presence of his body. Yes, it would have given him gratification; but as our Saviour, when the people were throwing palms in his way, wept and yearned over Jerusalem, so I know that he would have been, while in some respects the most cheerful and the most hopeful, yet deep down the saddest man of the company. For although he would recognize the noble instinct that brought those men there, and the wealth of truth and beauty that might be in their characters, yet he knew also that there was a large proportion of them that were not heart and soul consecrated to the service of his Master. Oh the voice with which he used to speak! "How can we get hold of those young men at Cambridge? There is something in the life of Jesus Christ that will touch them, but how can I bring that something to bear in such a way as to claim them for Christ?" You, young men, who have sat at his feet, who have won-

dered at his eloquence and rejoiced in his strength, would to God that you could enter into the spirit and into the life of his Master! And I know one way, and only one way, in which you can do full service to the life of Phillips Brooks; and that is by giving yourself in full and free service to the life of his Master, Jesus Christ.



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